

DIME NOVEL ROUND-UP

A monthly magazine devoted to the collecting, preservation and literature of the old-time dime and nickel novels, libraries and popular story papers.

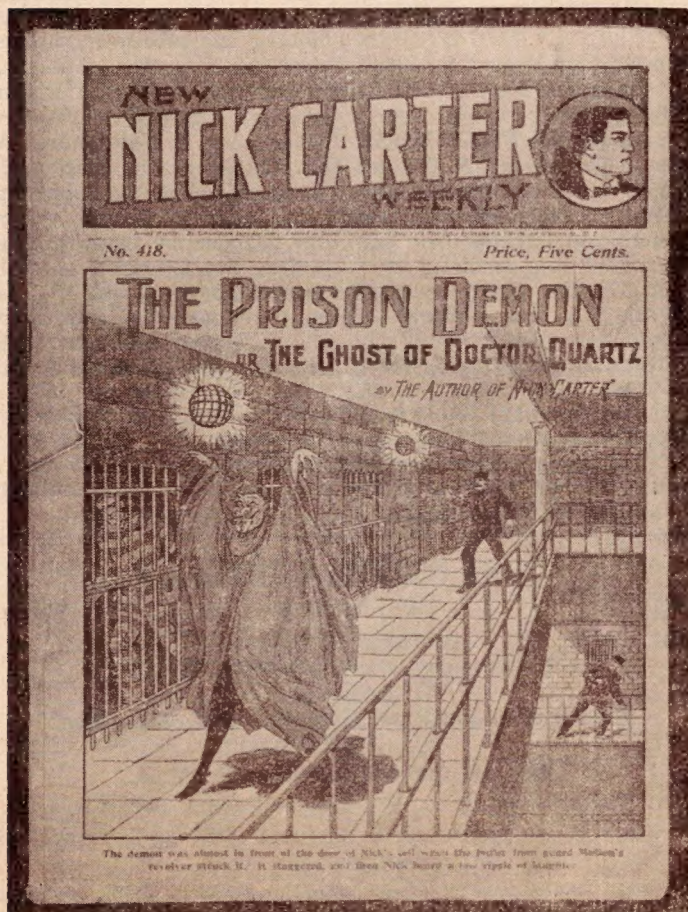
Vol. 23 No. 5

May 15, 1955

Whole No. 272

"The Greatest Sleuth That Ever Lived"

by J. Edward Leithead



Cover of a Nick Carter Weekly from the Charles Duprez collection of Dime Novel Pictures

"The Greatest Sleuth That Ever Lived"

by J. Edward Leithead

Title is from a 1906-1907 Street & Smith advertisement of Nick Carter Weekly, which begins, "We know, boys, that there is no need of introducing to you Nicholas Carter, the greatest sleuth that ever lived—" (in some of the ads "detective" was substituted for "sleuth"). It is singularly appropriate in my case. Even though I am nearing sixty, Nick Carter is as real to me as Sherlock Holmes is to the Baker Street Irregulars—in fact, I feel the same about Holmes and also Old King Brady, and few fictional characters have that lifelike quality.

In response to my request for information in my article, More About the Nick Carter Libraries, in the February 1953 issue of ROUNDUP, Mr. W. S. Houston, of Greensboro, N. C., very kindly loaned me seven of his early Magnet Detective Libraries, which are real collectors' items, being first editions and in very nice condition.

No. 1, A Klondike Claim, is dated Sept. 1, 1897. This was a reprint of four issues of New Nick Carter Weekly (or Library, as it was titled for a few issues) No. 1 from page 1 to 68, No. 2 from page 69 to 121, No. 3 from page 122 to 175, and No. 4 from page 176 to 218. Although these are all Trim Carter (Chick's son) tales, his name is changed to Harvey Stokes. I

suppose this should be classified as a Nick Carter item, but it would have been better had Trim's name been used as in the original stories.

No. 3, A Titled Counterfeiter, or, The American Detective in France, bears the copyright 1892 and probably was serialized in the New York Weekly. The detective is Wat Denton, no mention of his connection with Nick Carter that I can find; but in No. 5, The Crime of a Countess, or, The American Detective and the Russian Nihilist, there is an introduction beginning, "I, Nick Carter, sat in my library one afternoon, pretending to read, but in reality watching the frolic of my two boys with a young man who lay sprawled on the floor." The young man is Wat Denton. A gentleman is ushered in, seeking Nick's aid in a case, but the latter turns the client over to Denton and concludes the introduction thus, "And, except to write what follows, I never had anything more to do with the case of the man who wanted a detective who was an American and yet could speak Russian like a native." This story also, copyrighted in 1892, was no doubt a New York Weekly serial, and apparently Wat Denton was a pupil of Nick Carter's. Therefore, Magnet Library Nos. 3 and 5 probably belong to the Nick Carter saga.

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No. 7, *The American Marquis*, or, *A Detective for Vengeance*. A story of a masked Bride and a Husband's Quest, was copyrighted 1889, likely another New York Weekly serial, and contains numerous illustrations. Clinton Hastings is the detective in this book, no reference to Nick Carter, so I think it can be ruled out as a Carter item. The author was John R. Coryell, and as the style of writing is the same as in Nos. 3 and 5, doubtless he wrote all three.

In No. 8, *An Australian Klondike*, we have again four reprints from *New Nick Carter Weekly*—No. 5 from page 1 to 64, No. 6 from page 65 to 117, #7 from page 118 to 169, and No. 8 from page 170 to 222. And again Trim Carter has been rechristened Harvey Stokes.

No. 191, *The Murray Hill Mystery*, published in *Magnet* April 24, 1901, but with two earlier copyright dates indicating two stories woven into one, is the story of Frank Faulkner, a young reported for the "Daily Bee". There is also a Hindoo detective named Hyjah, who seems to play a prominent part. Obviously not a Nick Carter item.

Nobody came forward with any information on *Magnets* #16, *A Woman's Hand*, or #73, *Two Plus Two*, so these titles are still open to question as Nick Carter items. Likewise, no information was forthcoming on the issues of *Union Jack* (Sexton Blake) reprinted as Nick Carters in *New Magnet* between #850 and 1025.

But, further reducing the number of possible Sexton Blake reprints as recorded in my previous Nick Carter article, Mr. H. W. Alsford, San Francisco, California, wrote me, confirming my belief that *New Magnet* #884, *The Door of Doubt*, or, *The Fatal Knock*, contained a reprint from *Old Broadbrim Weekly* #4—this Nick Carter volume is about the Bats of Baltimore, the heading of Chapter 18 is "Two Bats in Council". We can be certain that if there was one reprint from *Old Broadbrim*, others were used, perhaps all 51 issues of that weekly about the elder Quaker detective. My thanks to Mr. Houston

and Mr. Alsford for helping me out.

Another of the *Magnets* loaned by Mr. Houston was #93, *The Adventures of Harrison Keith*, Detective, a volume about which I've been asked many questions, but never before had a chance to examine. It contains twelve short stories and was published on June 7, 1899.

Inside are copyright dates 1897 and 1899. Evidently these stories were printed elsewhere before publication in book form. Maybe the *New York Weekly*. One story, *The Name on the Stone*, has a pencilled notation above the title: "Old N. Y. 5c Lib. Alan Planchet." Whether the name refers to the author or a character in the original story, I don't know. No Planchet in the story as printed here. Another of the tales, *The Chest of Gold*, is signed by an author's name—Wilfrid Galt—the only occurrence of the kind in the book. The two yarns mentioned are printed in larger type than the rest, which suggests they were part of a different book of shorts and, when included with the other Keith stories in #93, the same plates were used. They are all well written, logical detective stories and could have been penned by Frederick W. Davis, said to have created the character of Harrison Keith. Keith operates throughout the series without the assistants, Rogers, Donovan and Brinkerman, who later aided him. One of the minor differences between Harrison Keith and Nick Carter was that Keith smoked a pipe, only occasionally a cigar, while Nick mostly smoked cigars.

Just for the record, I'll list here the names of those who wrote Nick Carter tales as I know them—I'm sure the list isn't complete and someone may add to it. First, then, John R. Coryell. There has been some disagreement about Coryell being the originator of Nick Carter. Not long ago I came across an ad of Ralph Cummings' in October 1949 *ROUNDUP*, asking for information about "Graham E. Forbes, Creator of Nick Carter". I'd never heard of Forbes (I must have overlooked the ad at the time of publication) and I wrote

Ralph. But he couldn't recall anyone answering the ad or anything about Forbes, so the latter's connection with Nick Carter must, I suppose, remain unknown.

In "The Confessions of a Dime Novelist", told to Gelett Burgess, in the New York Bookman, August 1902, Eugene T. Sawyer is credited with creating Nick Carter. In this very interesting article are mentioned several titles, which I find were printed in Nick Carter Library—#72, Murdered for Revenge, or, Nick Carter's Peculiar Case, #89, Looted in Transit, or, Nick Carter Among the Express Thieves, #123, A Dead Man's Hand, or, Nick Carter's Matchless Method—and no doubt Mr. Sawyer did many, many others for the Library. He says that he wrote, altogether, about 75 novels. This should definitely do away with other estimates of his output that I have seen, such as "nearly 300 Nick Carters". And not all his stories, even detective stories, were Nick Carters. Among New York Weekly serials he penned were The Maltese Cross, or, The Detective's Quest, reprinted in Magnet Library, but not a Nick Carter. He wrote 50,000 word novels for Log Cabin Library, too.

The late Gilbert Patten stated in a letter to a Brotherhood member—ROUNDUP Sept. 1944—"With the exception of the first few Nick Carter yarns written by John R. Coryell, (they) were knocked off mainly by one man, who had written under variations of his own name and under pen names as well, for Beadle." Did Mr. Patten mean Eugene T. Sawyer? I have no knowledge that Mr. Sawyer ever wrote for Beadle, nor of his pen names. "Variations of his own name" sounds like Harry St. George Rathborne, who, I understand, wrote for just about all the old-time novel and story-paper publishers but Frank Leslie and George Munro.

W. Bert Foster, as I recall, told me that John R. Coryell had started Nick Carter on his detective career, and Mr. Foster was long on the Street & Smith writing staff. I might mention here the issues of New Nick Carter Weekly which were his—#565,

566, 616, 617, 618, 619, 620, 621, 648, 649, 650, 651, 652, 653, 665, 666, 667, 668, 669, 670, 671, 672, 673, 674, 675, 676, 677, 678, 679, 680, 681, 682.

Harry A. Keller, an editor with Street & Smith when their 5¢ weeklies were appearing on every newsstand in the land, has stated that, "The character of Nick Carter was created by John R. Coryell . . ."

To conclude the case for Mr. Coryell, there's no getting around the fact that his was the first published Nick Carter story, a New York Weekly serial, beginning in Vol. 41, No. 46, dated Sept. 18, 1886, the title, The Old Detective's Pupil, or, The Mysterious Crime of Madison Square; and that Mr. Coryell followed this successful tale with two other Nick Carter serials, A Wall Street Haul and Fighting Against Millions. Exactly how many other Nick Carters he wrote, I can't say, but certainly he wrote the first and original three. The son of John R. Coryell had an article in the July 1929 issue of The Bookman, but I've never been able to locate a copy.

We have, then, John R. Coryell starting Nick on the road to fame, Eugene T. Sawyer contributing greatly to his popularity in the Nick Carter Library (Mr. Sawyer states in his interview with Mr. Burgess that his "Nick Carters . . . ran to about 25,000 words", the length of most of the tales in the Library), also Thomas W. Hanshaw (who later authored a cloth-bound book series, Cleek of the Forty Faces, Cleek of Scotland Yard, etc.), and a writer named Alvert (or Albert) Tozer, about whom I have no more data than that I believe he died sometime in 1916 or 1917. There was a writer of Nick Carter tales named Spaulding, a paralytic and bedfast, and I particularly wish I had more information about him, for his wonderful feat in producing these stories under handicap deserves special mention. One Charles Westbrook—I have an idea this may be a pseudonym—wrote at least five Nick Carter shorts, published in Ainslee's Magazine the latter part of 1900 and early 1901. As to the authorship of the hundred and

more Nick Carter shorts in New York Weekly between 1894 and 1896, they were probably the work of several writers who were doing longer Nick Carter tales regularly.

It would be interesting to know who penned the first Doctor Quartz tales in Nick Carter Library, #13, 3,000 Miles by Freight, #14, The Thirteen's Oath of Vengeance, 15, The Fate of Doctor Quartz, for the wily doctor was an excellent character creation and appeared fairly often thereafter, as late as 1926 in new stories in Detective Story Magazine. Personally, I think he was invented by Sawyer or Hanshew.

The one and only Frederick Merrill Van Rensselaer Dey, Nick Carter historian supreme, started writing about him early in 1904, in New Nick Carter Weekly, and Mr. Dey's close rival in productivity and detective story craftsmanship was Frederick W. Davis, who had been writing detective yarns for Street & Smith previous to that. I have already spoken of W. Bert Foster's contribution to Nick's fame in New Nick Carter Weekly (not counting his brand new N. C. tales for New Magnet), and William Perry Brown and George C. Jenks also did some Nick Carters.

That brings us to the last writer of the Nick Carter saga that I know of—Richard Wormser, experienced newspaper, advertising and publicity writer, who penned all the long feature novels in the forty issues of Nick Carter Magazine, and the shorter yarns about Nick with Patsy as his pupil, under the pseudonym "Harrison Keith." Mr. Wormser may also have written the shorter Nick Carter stories that appeared for a time in Street & Smith's magazine, Clues.

The Philadelphia Inquirer of December 1, 1954, had a writeup of Mr. William J. de Grouchy, who died the previous Monday, November 29th. In part, The Inquirer says: "Mr. de Grouchy, who was born in this city, was an editor of Street and Smith Publications, New York, before retiring five years ago. He formerly was art editor of the Curtis Publishing Co., serving in that position from

1913 to 1932. While with the New York publishing firm, Mr. de Grouchy was instrumental in promoting 'The Shadow' mystery books. He also revived the 'Nick Carter' detective stories." I take the latter to mean the Nick Carter Magazine and Nick Carter stories published in Clues.

I have frequently been asked for a list of the volumes of short stories in Magnet and New Magnet Library—here it is, and I'm reasonably sure it's complete:

(Nick Carters)

- 89—The Detective's Pretty Neighbor. Reprint #1018.
- 97—The Puzzle of Five Pistols. Reprint #1020.
- 101—The Stolen Pay Train. Reprint 992.
- 105—A Bite of an Apple. Reprint #1022
- 111—The Stolen Race Horse. Reprint #1024.
- 117—A Herald Personal. Reprint #1026.
- 123—The Elevated Railroad Mystery. Reprint #1200.
- 129—The Man Who Stole Millions. Reprint #1007.
- 135—The Crime of the French Cafe. Reprint #1006.
- 196—The Queen of Knaves. Not reprinted.
- 201—The Steel Casket. Not reprinted.
- 207—The Blow of a Hammer. Reprinted #1201.
- 213—Millions at Stake. Reprint #1210.
- 220—The Dumb Witness. Not reprinted.

(About Other Detectives)

- 72—Sherlock Holmes Detective Stories. By A. Conan Doyle. Two other Sherlock Holmes volumes, which it seems should have been printed in Magnet Library, were issued in a separate series of six Doyle stories to sell at 25¢ each—A Study in Scarlet and At the Sign of the Four (the four other titles were not Holmes tales). The two Holmes stories were reprinted in the Arrow Library at 10¢ each.
- 92—Van, the Government Detective. By Judson Taylor. (I believe,

but am not certain, that this was a volume of shorts).

- 93—The Adventures of Harrison Keith, Detective.
- 115—The Detective Tales of Edgar Allen Poe. Poe's detective, C. Auguste Dupin, probably started the run of detective stories that hasn't abated since. This volume probably contains The Murders in the Rue Morgue, The Mystery of Marie Roget and The Purloined Letter.
- 152—Fifteen Detective Stories by Police Captains of New York.
- 591—Exploits of a Private Detective. By Scott Campbell. The first of four vols. of shorts about Felix Boyd by Scott Campbell (Frederick W. Davis), originally published, I think, in one of Street & Smith's pulp magazines, as were also his Below the Dead Line stories.
- 603—Adventures of Felix Boyd. By Scott Campbell.
- 615—Felix Boyd's Revelations. By Scott Campbell.
- 627—Felix Boyd's Final Problems. By Scott Campbell.

In the New Magnet 600's—I don't know the exact number—was a volume entitled, Arsene Lupin Versus Herlock Sholmes, by Maurice Leblanc, creator of Arsene Lupin, the gentleman burglar, and this may also have been short stories.

There were numerous tales in early issues of Magnet signed by Judson R. Taylor—#78, the Chosen Man, #82, The Masked Detective, #86, Brant Adams, #92, Van, the Government Detective, #102, Bruce Angelo, the City Detective, #139, Fritz, the German Detective, #148, Gipsy Blair, the Western Detective, #163, Phil Scott, the Detective. Stories signed by Scott Campbell began with #154, Driven to the Wall, and there was a special announcement by the publishers, "Have you read the Detective Stories of Scott Campbell as published by Street & Smith in the Magnet Library?" There's a long list of stories by Campbell, and I'm of the opinion that Judson R. Taylor, like Scott Campbell, was really Frederick W. Davis. If

"Taylor" wasn't Davis, it's possible the pseudonym was one of St. George Rathborne's, for the title, Gipsy Blair, the Western Detective, by Taylor, appears in The Shield Detective Series (J. S. Ogilvie Pub. Co.) and there are two tales by Rathborne under his own name in the same list, The Detective and the Poisoner and The Cartaret Affair.

I think I may have solved the puzzle of the authorship of some of the Shield Weekly (S. & S.) stories. That is, the issues from #1 to 16 inclusive, about detective hero Sheridan Keene and Chief Inspector Watts (which the late Harold C. Holmes, in his excellent article, SHIELD WEEKLY, in Roundup for March 1944, called the "Boston Series"). I don't possess any of the Shield Weekly, but a perusal of several tales from it that were serialized in issues of Nick Carter Stories—Cornered by Inches, The Man and the Hour, A Lion Among Wolves, A Double Play—rather convinces me that the name of the author, "Alden F. Bradshaw", was a pseudonym covering the identity of Frederick W. Davis.

Harold Holmes said in his article, and I thoroughly agree, that, "If all there were in Shield Weekly were these 16 issues, it could be said they were well written, interesting tales." Yes, they seem to be in Davis' excellent narrative style, and at least four chapter headings serve as clues—in Cornered by Inches, Chapter IX, A Strategic Move, and in A Lion Among Wolves, Chapter VII, The Acme of Knavery, Chapter VIII, Keene Lays a Trap and Chapter IX Keene Springs His Trap; these are headings which Davis used more than once in Nick Carter tales by him (with, of course, Nick's name in place of Keene's). I don't mean the last were a rehash of the Keene stories (though the Shield Weekly was reprinted in the Magnet Library), just that Davis was fond of these chapter headings and they were as suitable for one detective story as another. One chapter heading that easily identifies him in Nick Carters is The Detective Art. He liked that one particularly.

Another fairly good reason for thinking Davis penned the "Boston Series" about Keene is that he was himself a resident of New Bedford, Mass., for quite some time, I believe, probably often visited Boston, and, as Harold Holmes stated in his article, "I have lived and worked in Boston and can say from my own knowledge that all names of buildings, streets and localities in this series are real names of real places," which would indicate Davis' familiarity with the city.

I do not say that the Sheridan Keene tales were written especially for the *Shield Weekly*. More likely, as in the case of his Felix Boyd and Below the Deadline stories, they first saw publication in a *Street & Smith* magazine or some daily paper, for, in a Magnet Library advertisement of his tales, the publishers said (speaking of him under his pen name, Scott Campbell), "The author is well known to the readers of North America by his serial stories, which have appeared in the daily papers. This is the first time the public have been afforded the opportunity to purchase them in book form." One of those serials, *Saved by Death*, ran in the *BOSTON GLOBE*. Each of the Sheridan Keene tales could have appeared as a feature novelette in a magazine, for they average ten chapters to the story, and are about 25,000 words in length. That Davis wrote any but the first sixteen issues of *Shield Weekly*, I very much doubt.

FRANK MERRIWELL AGAIN ON THE NEWSSTANDS

Within a few days of the publication of Mr. Guinon's article, "Reprints of the Merriwell Stories," I received an advance copy of the newest Merriwell publication. It was a "comic" published by the Charlton Comics Group. The stories apparently are new, at least I do not recognize them, but they retain the Merriwell flavor. The first issue contains three stories about Frank Merriwell and introduce Harry Rattleton and Bart Hodge. It is hoped that other of Merry's chums

and foes will be resurrected in future issues. The first story is, appropriately enough, about baseball with Frank winning a Yale Frosh game with Princeton from the "outfield". The second is a hazing story in the Gilbert Patten tradition. The third flashes back to Frank's arrival at Yale and an adventure with mobsters who are intimidating an old newsman and his son.

Mr. H. M. London of Frank Merriwell Enterprises says in a recent letter that the stories will be new but the format will remain the same. Frank's sterling character, athletic ability and "do or die-ism" will continue to be stressed. The *Tip Top Weeklies* will be used for story ideas, but there will be no similarity of sequence.

The face of Frank Merriwell on the cover and in the book itself was drawn to resemble Larry Craig who plays the lead in the Frank Merriwell TV films. A better choice could not have been made. It fits many a mental picture made of Frank in reading of his exploits in the *Tip Top Weekly*.

The Round-up wishes the new publication success and urges all members to purchase a copy from the newsstands or better still subscribe for a year.

NEW ADDRESSES

193. W. O. G. Lofts, 56 Sheringham House, Lisson St., Marylebone, London N.W. 1, England.
140. Frank Merriwell Enterprises, 1040 Las Palmas Ave., Hollywood 38, Calif.
100. Roy E. Swanstrom, 617½ East Maryland Ave., St. Paul, Minn.
151. Denis R. Rogers, 111 Hazelbank Rd., Catford, London S.E. 6, Eng.

WANT

All Around Weekly #35-#52.
Wide Awake Weekly #13-28-30.
For Sale—Sport story and other mag. Chelsea House stiff cover A-1 shape copies. Other novels. Send for list.

Lou Kohrt

3749 Robinhood St., Houston, Texas

The next issue of the Round-Up will contain "The Gentleman's Journal", by A. W. Lawson; "Long Stories in My Collection", by William M. Burns; and "Sexton Blake" by W. O. G. Lofts.

NEWSY NEWS

by Ralph F. Cummings

Well, I see some of the fellows are getting into print again. Eli A. Messier had a fine write-up in the Sunday Star, Northern Rhode Island's Picture-Feature Weekly. It came out March 27th, 1955, a full page. "Remember Nick Carter? No! See Eli Messier on Page 4." "Readin' in the Good Old Days, East Blackstone Man collects the tales of "derring-do" of the newsstands half a century ago." Story by Charles H. Leach. And Eli made the front page as well as inside on page 4. Why so serious a look on your face, Eli?

Mr. and Mrs. Michael Serdy of Homestead, Pa., also had a fine quarter of a column with picture of him and his wife, surrounded with their collection of old post cards, dolls, and what-not, but his dime novels don't show in the picture. This article came out in The Daily Messenger, Friday, April 1st, 1955. "Michael Serdy Enjoys Variety In His Collection." Retired steelworker noted as hobbyest.

Who else expects to get into print this year?

Bill Claggett says that he and his wife got a surprise when Mr. and Mrs. Roy Morris made them a fine visit, April 3rd, 1955, and they had a big time talking over the old timers, and old times as well, and looking at the novel illustrations, and so forth.

Eli Messier and Clyde Wakefield visit ye Editor Cummings of this column every now and then, also Ernest Beique of Swappers and Collectors Brotherhood.

Does any one know the present whereabouts of John E. King, formerly of P. O. Box 1191, Altoona, Penn. If anyone knows, please get in touch with ye editor of this column.

DIME NOVELS

A partial list of some of the scarce ones now on hand, for sale.

Beadle's Dime Novels
Beadle's New Dime Novels
Beadle's Standard Library of Romance
Beadle's Pocket Novels
Beadle's 20¢ Novels
Beadle's Dime Fiction
Beadle's Boys Books of Romance and Adventure
Beadle's Home Magazine
Beadle's Youth's Casket
Beadle's Book of Verses
Beadle's Book of Etiquette
Beadle's Letter Writer

The above at various prices. We also have:

Beadle's Speakers at 50¢
Beadle's Dialogues at 50¢

And the following rare ones at various prices:

Munro's 10¢ Novels
Starr's American Novels
10¢ Novelettes
Hilton's Dime Books
Boys' Own Novels
Ornum 10¢ Indian Novels
Ornum 10¢ Popular Novels
Munro 10¢ Claude Duval Novels
Munro Black Highwayman Novels
De Witt 10¢ Romances
Cameron-Ferguson Novels
Richmond Sensation Novels
Beadle American Tales
Bonny Buster Letters
Shorty's Jokes (Tousey)

And some Tousey Handbooks at 25¢.

And some Songsters such as Hoolley's, Fenian, Christy, Tony Pastor, De Witt, LaVerd Sisters, Minnie Lee, at \$1.00 each.

And dialogues by Munro and De Witt at 50¢ each.

* * *

Munro's Black Highwayman Novels complete in three black leather bound volumes.

Ralph P. Smith

Box 985

Lawrence, Mass.